

**Russian Interests in Iraq**

**Q.** Mr. President, one question on Iraq—

**The President.** Sure.

**Q.** —which is now very sort of hot issue. If push comes to shove and a military solution is necessary, and if the current regime, Saddam Hussein's regime, is going to be toppled, are Russian economic interests going to be considered?

**The President.** Well, first, I hope that all the ifs don't happen. I mean, I hope that Mr. Saddam Hussein disarms, like he said he would do. But the problem is, he said he would do it for 11 years, and he hasn't done anything for 11 years. I mean, in the name of peace he should disarm. And so we're working with Russia and other members of the United Nations Security Council to send a clear message to Mr. Saddam Hussein that we expect you to disarm.

If he doesn't disarm, then we'll disarm him in the name of peace. And of course, we'll be interested in all interests. We have no desire to run the show, to run the country. We will work to encourage the development of new leadership, should this happen, that will recognize the rights of all citizens that live in this country, that will keep the territorial integrity of Iraq intact. And we understand Russia has got interests there, as do other countries. And of course, those interests will be honored.

**Q.** Thank you very much, Mr. President.

**The President.** I'm glad you're here.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 1:25 p.m. in the Library at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to President Vladimir Putin of Russia; President Eduard Shevardnadze of the Republic of Georgia; and President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. The transcript of this interview was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 21. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

**Interview With LNK TV of Lithuania**

*November 18, 2002*

**President's Upcoming Visit to Lithuania**

**Q.** Mr. President, you are the first President of the United States to visit Lithuania. What is your message to Lithuania's people?

**The President.** Well, first, I'm honored to be invited. Secondly, I'm really looking forward to it. And my message is: You're free. Freedom is precious, and we welcome our friends the Lithuanians into the—as a free nation into the brotherhood of nations.

I'll also say to the world that the Baltic countries know what it means to live under fear and the lack of freedom, and to have these countries be allied with the United States and other nations is important to our soul. It's important to have that sense of freedom as a source of vigor and strength, and a very important alliance. That's what I want to say.

**War on Terror**

**Q.** What are America and Lithuania going to do after the Prague, together?

**The President.** Well, we're going to work to fight terror. That's the new threat we face. It's most evident here in America because we've been under attack, and we're still under attack. People still want to hurt us because of what we stand for. But countries which love freedom are not immune from these people. These are coldblooded killers, and we've got a charge to keep for a long time coming. And the best way to do that is work together.

So the NATO mission is one of defending freedom by fighting against those who would try to defeat freedom, which means we've got to share intelligence, work together militarily in a way that complements everybody, cut off the money of the terrorists. I mean, there's a lot to do. But that's the true threat that we face.

Russia is no longer a threat. After Prague, I'm going to Russia. And I'm going to say to the Russian people, "You shouldn't fear

expansion of NATO to your border. These are peace-loving people. These are freedom-loving people that are now on your border. You ought to welcome them. It should help Russian security"—that the cold war is over, that the United States doesn't view Russia as a threat and neither does NATO. So we've got to address our sights to the new threats.

#### **Russia-U.S. Relations**

**Q.** Relationship between Western democracies and Russia seems to be very friendly. But do you really trust President Putin?

**The President.** Sure, of course. I press any leader that doesn't believe 100 percent in freedom, and of course I do—I'm—freedom of the press or Chechnya or issues that indicate that there might not be a whole-hearted commitment to freedom of the people. I do it in a way that's a friendly way. I believe the best way to work together is to do it in a spirit of cooperation. I believe the best way to make sure we've got good relations is to make it clear that there's no animosity. But of course I do. I work very closely with him. Russia is an important country.

And we want Russia to be a country based upon the values which we share, because we believe those values are the best values for the human condition of everybody. I like to tell people, freedom is not an American gift; freedom is a gift from the almighty God. And I firmly believe that. And freedom is important in any country in the world.

#### **Lithuania**

**Q.** Some people wonder why the United States, the superpower of the world, pays so much attention to the small Baltic state Lithuania. What could you tell those people?

**The President.** Well, I can tell those people everybody matters. See, our country believes in the worth of every individual. We believe everybody is precious; everybody counts; and that we are rooted, our whole history and our very being is rooted, on the notion of people being able to realize their dreams. And that's what we believe.

That's why we never recognized the Soviet domination of the Baltics. We called Lithuania independent for all those years. And now we can say Lithuania is independent,

and Lithuania is forever free. And that's our commitment.

#### **Future of NATO**

**Q.** How do you imagine the future of NATO Alliance after new members will join?

**The President.** Better—better because the—NATO will have this new spirit. Listen, if you lived under slavery and subjugation and you're free, there's a spirit. There's a strength of purpose. There's a remembrance of what it's like. There's no gray areas between good and evil. That's an important spirit in NATO. Lithuania brings a wonderful spirit of strength of purpose, of endurance.

Secondly, as we change the military strategy to reflect the new threat—see, Russia is not a threat militarily. The threats that we now face come from a global terror network. And we'll change our military capabilities to meet the strategies necessary to defeat terrorism. And Lithuania will have an important contribution to make, as will all countries in NATO. So the expansion of NATO will make it easier for us to defend the peace.

**Q.** Mr. President, thank you very much, indeed. It was a great pleasure to talk to you.

**The President.** We'll see you in Vilnius.

**Q.** Thank you.

**The President.** It's going to be exciting for me.

**Q.** For us, too. We're waiting for that.

**The President.** I can't wait. Thanks. Make sure the weather is good, will you? [*Laughter*]

**Q.** Yes, we'll do our best. Thank you.

NOTE: The interview was videotaped at 1:32 p.m. in the Library at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to President Vladimir Putin of Russia. The transcript of this interview was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 21. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

#### **Remarks Prior to Discussions With Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom and an Exchange With Reporters in Prague**

*November 21, 2002*

**President Bush.** I'm really looking forward to visiting with the Prime Minister of